



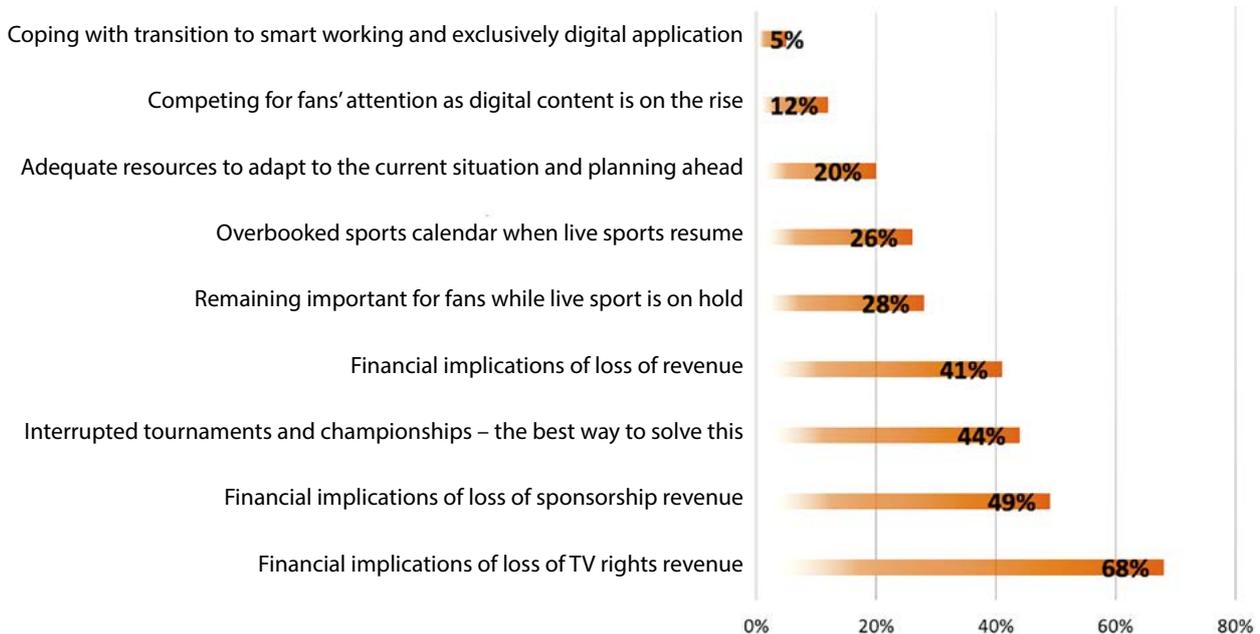
EDITORIAL

The impact of COVID-19 on sport: possible future scenarios?

It took me a while to write this editorial, in fact, almost the entire quarantine period; I started it time and time again, and only after a few lines (computer editorials and music both include "lines"! I put it on the backburner. It was, is and will continue to be a complicated time, not easy to untangle ourselves from because it basically caught us all unprepared. Let's repeat that here: All unprepared. Let's spell it out paper: All un-pre-pared!!! With no less than three exclamation marks, as our dear reader - who is perhaps squinting - can see!

This lockdown contributed - without asking anyone for permission - to creating moments of intense emotions, with so many people (thousands and thousands) who passed away in absolute solitude, as well as important and (sometimes) illuminating moments of analysis and evaluation on some dynamics of world society, which has seen the ephemeral ability of capitalism collapse in front of a microscopic virus: never measure the danger of your opponents by size! And watch out for what you don't see! The invisible cannot be dominated.

Sport was not and could not escape from COVID-19's overbearing and cynical passion in involving and infecting us. The world sports organization extremely dedicated to the event culture had no weapons of any kind to put in place countermeasures of another nature. All it could do was utter mere remarks. Understandable, but not useful to the cause, not decisive for anything. Paradoxically, sports with greater visibility and with greater focus on the event as a representation of that sport, are today paying the highest price compared to the wide-



spread uncertainty about how to go about starting up again. Even the Olympic Games had to yield and move its next event to 2021.

A dear friend shared an interesting, well-made document, created by Insights Sport Connect, with a detailed analysis of the impact that the constraints of this pandemic can have on sport, seen as an industry. A worldwide analysis that also impacts on the detailed vision of some phenomena that are often not perceived.

The report published on April 19 of this year was based on the feedback from over 130 sports professionals in an effort to understand the personal challenges experienced in all areas of the sports industry in the face of the impact of Covid-19.

86% of respondents believe that this pandemic will have a negative impact in the short term: 2020 - 2021. Among these, 26% believe that the negative impact will stretch even beyond 2021. The same group was asked to give a value, in terms of priority, to the following actions to be taken to partially mitigate the problem.

They replied as follows:

95% are convinced that the first thing to do is to put in place a strategic plan during this downtime; 55% place greater attention on data analysis and a different use of digital;

53% suggest the creation of new and innovative systems aimed at new revenue sources;

51% direct their attention to a rapid return and increase of live sport;

47% replied, in terms of priorities, that creativity should be increased;

only 19% believe that the governing bodies, clubs, and bodies in charge must, within context, maximize the potential for involving fans in the absence of sporting events.

The financial implications of revenue loss related to broadcasting and sponsorships are considered the biggest challenges. The sample group gave the following priorities to the questions in the below chart.

These data inevitably lead us to think that the model applied and appreciated so far in sport has never considered alternative strategies to the consolidated ones: reading only the present, no prospective

glance towards the future and the unknown. Teaching the awareness of the overall unpreparedness with respect to this particular moment inevitably leads us to take into consideration that when we conceive a future, for whatever field it is intended, it is never a good idea to think of just one possible future scenario, it is fundamental to factor in all its eventualities.

Reading the future, in life as well as in top sports, is generally aimed at maximum profit with minimum means. During this pandemic we have realized that such systems never provide for a second choice and how highly vulnerable they are. It is a gamble, a bet that can be lost. Risking is a ... a very risky business! What can we learn from it? One of the many things is that, since crises are always precious moments, indeed occasions for reflection: who knows if with a little common sense and reflection on more enlightened views, one cannot elaborate a different thought for the future organization of sport. Now as never before, we need thought of a higher kind.

Antonio Urso
EFW President